

For Immediate Release: December 2, 2010

Contact: Maria Reppas, (202) 225-6631 / (202) 527-0149 maria.reppas@mail.house.gov

*S.987/H.R.2103 Provides A Strategy to Fight Child Marriage in Developing Countries*

Washington, DC - Last night, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed the *International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act*

(S.987/H.R.2103), which was originally introduced by Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04). This legislation calls for the United States government to develop a multiyear strategy to address the prevalence of child marriage in the developing world.

"I want to commend Senator Richard Durbin and every Democratic and Republican member of the U.S. Senate for acting to end child marriage. It is now up to my colleagues in the U.S. House to immediately act to make sure every girl has the opportunity to grow up without the fear of being forced into marriage. Millions of girls around the world have been forced into marriages that destroy their childhood, health and future. It is time for child marriage to end," McCollum said.

Child marriage remains a common traditional practice across the globe today, specifically in developing countries. An estimated 60 million girls under the age of 18 are forced into marriages with men twice their age and sometimes older. The practice occurs in countries, including Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Chad, and Yemen.

Congresswoman McCollum introduced H.R. 2103 on April 27, 2009 in recognition that child marriage is a human rights violation that undermines U.S. investments in foreign assistance to improve the education, health and economic status of women and girls. This legislation proposes a comprehensive strategy for the United States to help prevent child marriage and promote the empowerment of girls everywhere.

A bipartisan group of 109 Members of the U.S. House have co-sponsored the *International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act*

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*Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.*

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